

**Virginia Comprehensive Assistance Network [VA CAN] Meeting
February 15, 2005**

Meeting Notes:

Attendance:

Jim McKean, Ch. - DBA, Richard Rasmussen - DEQ, Keith Boisvert- DEQ, , Eric Olson- DPOR, Bill Scruggs – DACS, Jennifer Wester – DOLI, and Chuck McCarty - DEQ.

Note: Bold indicates first time attendee.

Meeting Speaker:

Bill Scruggs, Project Manager, Agribusiness, DACS

1. Opening/Introductions - Jim McKean

Round-the-table introductions.

2. Presentation by Bill Scruggs – Agribusiness at DACS

There is a new Secretariat of Agriculture and Forestry held by Robert Bloxom with Bill Dickinson as Deputy Secretary. The Agribusiness website is <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/agribusiness/index.html>. Its mission is to foster a sound agricultural economy and to help create jobs and economic investment in Virginia agribusiness.

- To accomplish this mission, DACS is actively recruiting agricultural businesses to Virginia and actively facilitating the expansion of the existing agricultural industry. The assistance includes everything from providing marketing assistance to promoting regional cooperation to foster business growth and development.
- Agriculture has \$35.9 billion in annual sales accounting for over 380,000 jobs.
- DACS looks to maintain traditional agriculture production while looking for new agribusiness ventures, i.e. wineries, specialty crops, agri tourism, nursery and greenhouses, etc.
- DACS partners with numerous other entities, i.e. SBDCs, VEDP, USDA, SBFA, etc.
- Agribusiness development services:
 - Governor's Net Agricultural Receipts Initiative-double receipts by 2015;
 - Governor's Wine Study Initiative- over 100 wineries in VA and growing; and
 - Agricultural Vitality Program-
 - Farm Business Transition - average farmer's age is 58 years old-upon retirement or death what happens to the farm;
 - Farmland Preservation - farmers selling development rights so the farm remains in agriculture forever.
 - Governor's Virginia Works Initiative- competing with other regions by providing funding for product development, marketing and research/extension of specialty agriculture.
 - Specialty Agriculture Component – nursery and greenhouse has grown 100 to 150 % in last 10 years;
 - High Value Products vs. Commodities- i.e. specialty soybeans and wheat; organically grown crops; and
 - Value-Added Consumer-Ready Products - i.e. pre-packed salads and broccoli; and other food processing products.

Future of VA Agriculture

- Business Alliances through strategic partnerships to gain a greater market presence, i.e. cooperatives.
- Integration of production with processing and consumers.

3. Old Business

Meeting Notes from December 14, 2004 meeting approved.

4. Roundtable

Richard Rasmussen – The State Air Board will be holding its next meeting on 3/2/05 at DEQ's Piedmont Regional Office and will be discussing numerous issues including VOC and Non-Attainment area designations. The Small Business Assistance Programs in Region 3 are working with the USEPA to secure funding to provide a limited number of loans per state to independent truckers to purchase equipment that replaces the need for having the trucks idling during out-of-service hours for heat, cooling, etc. This grant project concept is going to be extended nationally by the USEPA instead of just to Region 3. Tracy Garland had a son in December and is currently on leave at home. The Virginia Sustainable Future Summit will be held on September 13-15, 2005 at the Greater Richmond Convention Center in Richmond. There may be an opportunity for a display booth at the event. The annual environmental event at VMI will be April 10-12.

Jennifer Wester – Federal OSHA has a new head - Acting Assistant Secretary of Labor for OSHA Jonathan L. Snare. The federal OSHA budget remains flat. This year's legislative session has such DOLI issues as the "day of rest", inspection of boilers, failure to pay wages, etc. DOLI will be hiring a new trainer soon. The 10th Annual Virginia Occupational Safety and Health Conference "*A Decade of Meeting the Challenge*" will be held on June 8 – 10, 2005 at The Renaissance Portsmouth Hotel & Waterfront Conference Center, Portsmouth, Virginia. The conference brochure and flyer are found at http://www.doli.state.va.us/whatwedo/coop_prog/vosh_conference.htm.

Eric Olson– DPOR believes that more professions will be required to be regulated by DPOR after the Legislative session: including well drillers, aerial surveying, changing the financial threshold for Class B contractors, etc. The Governor's Task Force on the construction industry should have a final report should be available on the web in the spring.

Keith Boisvert – Discussed the Environmental Excellence Program and passed around a recent paid ad about the program in a Valley magazine. DEQ is promoting the Environmental Excellence Program and seeking new member businesses.

Jim McKean – Discussed a cooperative outreach program around the state to help women and minority businesses qualify for state projects and contracts. The multi-culture program at DBA is in limbo with the loss of a key staff member.

5. Next Meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, April 19 at DEQ's Piedmont Regional Office. Time - 10:00 AM.

6. Adjourned

Meeting adjourned at 12:10 PM.